C. Rebuilding a Nation (ca. 1877-ca. 1914)

1. Industrialization and Urbanization

C. Identify labor and workforce issues of the late nineteenth century, including perspectives of owners/managers and Social Darwinists

D. Explain the challenges and contributions of immigrants of the late nineteenth century

E. Explain the causes and impact of urbanization in the late nineteenth century
Gilded means “gold plated.” Objects are gilded to appear more valuable than they are, like a ring.

Therefore, in calling this era the “Gilded Age,” Mark Twain was saying it appeared valuable on the outside, but underneath it was not.
The Gilded Age

-The Gilded Age refers to the era in US History from the 1870s to the 1890s.

-This term was coined by Mark Twain, a prolific author in the late 1800s. Twain mocked greed and selfishness within his culture.

-Twain also attacked political corruption that arose through political leaders who put self-interest above service during the Gilded Age.
Political Machines

-Rapid growth of cities caused the rich to get richer and MORE citizens to become poor. Social Darwinism dominated the economy.

-“Political Machine” simply referred to groups who offered services to voters and businesses for political power and reelection.

-This is the structure of the political machine:
  (1) The City Boss: ruled the city as mayor
  (2) Ward Bosses: secured votes for the city mayor
  (3) Local Precinct Workers
Structure of the Political Machine

City Boss: The Mayor
Ward Boss: Secured votes
Local Precinct Workers
Corruption, Greed, and Political Machines

- The mayors gave favors to citizens in exchange for power to be in government offices.

- The goal was to GET ELECTED to maintain power.

- This is not necessarily a negative structure. Yet, it depended on the leader. Some leaders used their power corruptly and some used their power to help citizens.
Immigrants arrived in the USA in the late 1800s and early 1900s to work in factories.
Immigrants and the Political Machines
-Cities grew substantially in the late 1800s, due to the increase of factories and industry. Often, the workers who came to work at these factories were immigrants.

-Many leaders involved in the Political Machines were immigrants or the direct descendants of immigrants. The votes of the immigrants mattered a great deal to the political bosses.

-The Political Machines often attempted to accommodate the needs of the immigrants to keep political power.
Immigrants worked in an environment of Social Darwinism in the late 1800s and early 1900s.
Social Darwinism and Immigrants

-As immigrants arrived in the USA, they were radically impacted by Social Darwinism.

-Big business leaders paid low salaries and the factories had many health hazards.

-Many immigrants looked to the political machines to help them achieve better housing, improve city conditions, and to address other needs.
The Political Boss

-The “boss” served as mayor in the city. He had access to government jobs and business licenses.

-In some cases, the political machine helped citizens.

-For instance, Roscoe Conkling, mayor of Utica, New York, gave money to build city structures, helped hospitals, and gave to orphanages with his power.
While many mayors involved in political machines in the Gilded Age were corrupt, some, like Roscoe Conkling, used the process to help citizens get better schools, hospitals, orphanages, and helped to meet other needs as well.
Corruption in the Gilded Age

-Graft is a term that describes any illegal use of political power for personal gain.

-Kickbacks, over charging the city for a service and giving the surplus to the “boss,” was an example of graft.

-Criminals used bribes to pay a mayor to look the other way while they did illegal activity, another example of graft.
During the Gilded Age, corrupt political leaders paid contractors to do jobs for the city. Yet, the contractors illegally gave the mayor money back to bribe the mayor to let their company do the job. This was called a “kickback” and was against the law.
William “Boss” Tweed
The “Boss” Tweed Scandal

-William “Boss” Tweed led New York City in the late 1860s to the early 1870s.

-He gave $13 Million in tax payer money to build a $3 Million court house and took a “kickback” from the contractor.

-Tweed was given a prison sentence of 12 years, served 1 year, escaped, and he was eventually arrested again in Europe.
THE END